

BY-LAWS DEVELOPMENT FROM 1983 - 1993

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the 1983 GENERAL CONFERENCE:

After several years of study, and receiving grass-roots input, the governmental reorganization proposed by the GSS (Commission on Government Structures and Systems) was referred back to the GSS for additional feedback and consideration by local churches and Districts, with re-consideration for adoption at the 1985 General Conference. This proposal would have created six Regions throughout the USA and Canada (replacing the 11 Districts), each governed by a "Regional Committee". The UFMCC Board of Elders would have been composed of five members elected by the General Conference, and one Elder elected by each Region for a total of eleven members on the Board of Elders. This proposal also included a phase-in of changing the denominational tithe to 7% to the UFMCC and 8% to the Region. Defeated in full.

By-Laws changes adopted included a proposal from the Board of Elders removing the requirement that a District Coordinator must be Credentialed clergy in UFMCC. This was instigated by the South Central District's insistence on naming a lay person as District Coordinator at their May 1982 District Conference (Clarke Friesen). Subsequently, laity who have been elected to serve as District Coordinator include Adam DeBaugh (Mid Atlantic District); Mary Moore (Gulf Lower Atlantic District), Art Pearson (Western Canadian District), Lydia Segal (Eastern Canadian District), Jay Neely (Gulf Lower Atlantic District, Credentialed as Clergy during his tenure as District Coordinator), and Judy Dale (Great Lakes District).

The Conference also adopted minimum membership requirements as criteria for Missions (25 members) and Chartered Churches (35 members)--previously there had been no numerical requirements. When initially designated, study groups and Missions had not been allowed membership; thus, the rationale for the adoption of this numerical requirement was to promote greater congregational maturity.

The Conference brought further clarity to "titheable income" specifically exempting "building fund, deacons fund, and specified bequests and grants" from titheable income.

And, the '83 Conference also changed the review of licensed clergy. Initial credentialing was maintained for one year; however, thereafter Licensed Clergy could be re-Credentialed for a two year period.



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the 1985 GENERAL CONFERENCE:

This Conference adopted a dramatically revised proposal from the GSS. This proposal retained the Districts, but gave the Districts legislative authority to "empower the grass roots ministries that are most effectively enacted at the District level"; and established the District Committees (which were assigned some of the responsibilities of the former Board of Home Mission, plus additional duties). A number of responsibilities and authorities were assigned to the new District Committee; such as determining criteria for Chartered Churches and the specific responsibility to direct the life and growth of church bodies. (This effectively shifted the official responsibility for the growth and development of the denomination from the UFMCC to the Districts). Districts were charged with determining the composition of their District Committees.

The report also introduced the concept of New and Special Works, and voting church bodies (Commissioned and Chartered Churches); and declared that all churches will be referred to as churches, and thus eliminated the previous terms of "Study Group" and "Mission". The report also provided the option of various forms of administrative local church government, provided the UFMCC Board of Directors guidelines are maintained. The By-Laws changes require more accountability by local churches to the denomination: New Works are under the direct management and supervision of their District Committee, Commissions must be renewed annually with a review by the District Committee, and Chartered churches are reviewed every five years to assure they continue to meet the criteria of Chartering.

The proposal also created the General Council, comprised of the members of the Board of Elders and each District Coordinator, to "further more equitable representation and to develop more grass roots feed in and leadership on the Fellowship level". District Coordinators who were not Clergy were given voting rights. The action to create the General Council also officially divided up the former responsibilities of the Board of Elders; with the Board of Elders retaining spiritual and pastoral leadership, and administrative leadership assigned to the General Council.

This Conference also adopted numerous By-Laws proposals that changed the "his/her" terminology of the By-Laws to generic terms; such as "within his/her jurisdiction" was changed to "within the respective jurisdiction", "He/She may participate . ." to "The Pastor may participate . ." etc.

the 1987 GENERAL CONFERENCE:

The main By-Laws proposals adopted were "clean-up" from the 1985 GSS proposals adopted; such as replacing the words "Worship Coordinator" with the more generic term "pastoral leader"; and clarifying that the District Committee is accountable to its District Conference, and that the General Council has the authority and responsibility to assure that District documents (By-Laws, SOP's, etc.) are in compliance with UFMCC By-Laws, policies and procedures.

(Actually, the "focus" of this Conference was the displeasure with the Credentials Committee, and the major work to structure the CCCC. This did not involve By-Laws changes).

the 1989 GENERAL CONFERENCE:

This Conference continued the trend towards greater accountability by adding a clause for discipline of District officers and members of the District Committee; requiring that Student Clergy must be "approved" by the UFMCC Office of Certification; including the required Board of Pensions USA payments in the By-Laws for USA churches, and specifically stating that UFMCC program agencies are accountable to the General Conference through the General Council.

This Conference also adopted a By-Laws definition of "building fund", and "deacons fund" (deleting the term "Deacons' fund" in the process). This adoption also added the principle mortgage payment as exempt from tithes.

Other significant By-Laws changes included:

Giving elected officers of a District, by that District's option, vote at the District Conference, providing flexibility within a District,

Adding "disaffiliation" as reason for a local church's real property to revert to UFMCC. This is a key difference and a defining point between a more congregational-based form of government versus a more hierarchical form of government. The "legal" language for this has always been in the UFMCC By-Laws; however, this change brought the language clear and understandable to the average local church leader (and not just attorneys).

Since some local churches had been evading the "discipline of Pastor"/"removal of Pastor" By-Laws clauses by simply failing to renew a pastoral contract and "terminated" their pastor by their declining to renew the pastoral contract; a clause was added stating that unilateral failure to renew the pastoral contract did not constitute removal of the Pastor; offering a minimal level of security to the pastoral position.

the 1991 GENERAL CONFERENCE:

Perhaps the most significant By-Laws change was adding the non-discrimination clause in Article IV; and for the first time "sexual orientation" is mentioned in UFMCC By-Laws!

This Conference granted, in By-Laws, the Founder Rev. Elder Troy Perry a term of office on the Board of Elders for "the duration of his life" (adding a resignation clause and removal in accordance with By-Laws clause).

Other changes included a statement that Student Clergy appointment can only occur following registration with the CCCC, also deleting the "Office of Certification" and assigned those responsibilities to the CCCC;

an attempt to better define the "ministry of reconciliation" required before a petition to remove the pastor is valid;

adding clarity that the Boards of Pensions are national/regional;

and adding a provision whereby the 10% UFMCC tithe of local churches in Districts in countries outside the USA may be sent to the UFMCC headquarters. Up to this time, all of the 10% UFMCC tithes of churches in Districts outside the USA had been held by the District for utilization in the District for denominational activities and interests. This does not apply to WCE areas.

the 1993 GENERAL CONFERENCE:

This Conference brought greater clarity to "discipline of Clergy", attempting to make the system more equitable and expeditious, including who may initiate charges, and stating more clearly actions that may be taken if a Clergyperson is found guilty. The Conference also deleted the requirement that Pastors be responsible for counseling, primarily in view of our litigious society.

"Ministry of Reconciliation" was separated out from the Removal of a Pastor in an attempt to better distinguish between the two (formerly listed consecutively as sub-points a. and b., usually interpreted, and appearing to be "steps # 1 and # 2").

Greater flexibility was provided for Districts by allowing multiple persons to jointly share one position (Assistant District Coordinator); and by allowing Districts to grant voting rights at District Conferences in addition to those voting rights granted in the UFMCC By-Laws. This Conference also created greater flexibility for larger congregations by allowing congregations with 250 or more members to set their own local church quorum for congregational meetings between 10% - 20% of members-in-good-standing, also providing the option of establishing by local By-Laws the number of members-in-good-standing required to sign a petition calling for a special congregational meeting from 15% to 25%.

This Conference also eliminated nominations for Elder from the Conference business meeting floor---all nominations must now be submitted in advance through the

Elders Nomination Committee which was given status as a "Standing Program Agency" in the By-Laws.

Other By-Laws changes included:

A major re-working of the World Church Extension by-laws; including establishing a permanent Board of World Church Extension and creating the position of World Church Extension Administrator.

The Conference codified our commitment to inclusivity by adding the word "inclusivity" to the list of annually-determined stated goals and objectives of the local Commissioned church.

The quorum for business at General and District Conferences was changed and set at 55%.

The Board of Elders presented a By-Laws proposal stemming from the work of the Elders' Task Force on Structures and Systems; and, after intense debate and only by a one-vote margin, the Conference granted voting rights to those persons without UFMCC Clergy credentials Pastoring Commissioned and Chartered churches. Such individuals are seated, voting in the House of Laity. Amendments to add all pastors (including pastors of New Works) and all Clergy in process of transferring credentials to the UFMCC failed, though the amendment to add Lay Coordinators of Church Extension was passed.

And, funds generated by the local church to send delegates (Clergy and Laity) to District and General Conferences are now exempt from the denominational tithes per By-Laws change.

